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ABSTRACT

To address the community need for international training for small business, Normandale Community College applied for and obtained a federal grant for a program to assist 20 small to middle-sized firms in increasing their export capabilities to the Netherlands and West Germany, countries to which Minnesota had already developed strong trade ties. The program is directed primarily toward women- and minority-owned companies through the cooperation of several local and state organizations. The model program developed with the grant has five training components: (1) six how-to-export workshops; (2) an international marketing seminar series; (3) a small business export manual; (4) individual consulting services; and (5) language and cultural survival skills. Additional components include continuing support and development to help clients plan entry into foreign markets, student internship assistance, a quarterly newsletter, and fact-finding trips abroad as the final step before a business implements its international plan. An international business advisory committee has also been formed to provide input for workshop and seminar topics, including some instruction. (MSE)

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A MODEL INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS

by

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A Model International Business Program for Small Business

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Business and International Education Programs Grant

Introduction:

Normandale Community College is a comprehensive community college located in Bloomington, Minnesota, a southern suburb of Minneapolis and west of St. Paul, in an area of high population density and business activity. The college is the largest of the fourteen Minnesota community colleges, with a current, credit generating student count of 7,000 and an additional 7,500 non-credit, continuing education students. The college service area includes a concentration of high technology research and manufacturing including computing hardware and software and health technology. In addition, retail sales, banking, the hospitality industry and food processing contribute significantly to the economic activity of the southern metropolitan area.

Normandale Community College has developed long standing, cooperative programs in business education with area firms and commercial organizations and with other regional post secondary institutions. In addition, in the last four years the college has been engaged in the process of internationalization of its programs and curricular offerings. While examining the educational needs of the community, the college identified the need for international business training for small to middle sized firms that were unable to provide their own training nor willing to invest in high cost external consulting. Further, the college found that two metropolitan economic

development agencies, specifically serving women and minorities, expressed a strong need for international business education for their clients with potential to engage in export activity.

In order to address the community need for international training for small business, the college presented a proposal to the United States Department of Education Business and International Education Program with the specific goal to assist a target number of twenty small to middle sized firms to increase their export capabilities to the Netherlands and West Germany, countries where Minnesota and the Minnesota World Trade Center have already developed strong trade ties. The primary efforts of the program are directed toward women and minority owned companies through the cooperation of the Normandale Small Business Development Center, the Metropolitan Economic Development Association, a minority business development corporation, and the Women's Economic Development Corporation of Minnesota. The program objectives are to increase the international trade capabilities and consequently the volume of international business of the target companies; to enhance the international business expertise of other small businesses that may choose to participate in the program; to initiate cooperative approaches to international education between the academic community and business; and to advance the awareness and understanding of conducting business abroad for the Minnesota small business community and the Minnesota Community College System by developing a model program that others may use.

The United States Department of Education Business and International Education Program has granted Normandale Community College approximately $56,000 for a two year program for the academic years 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Components of the Model Program:

In order to meet the need for international business training for small businesses without the resources to provide their own training, and therefore, hesitant to approach the possibility of entering international markets, the program has developed a five part training component, a continuing support and development component and an implementation component where trading contacts are made.

The **training component** consists of five activities:

1. Six How to Export Workshops
2. An International Marketing Seminar Series
3. A Small Business Export Manual
4. Individual Consulting Services
5. Language and Culture Survival Skills

During the 1987 through 1989 academic years, 6 one half to one day **Export Workshops** are being conducted by international business experts with practical experience in foreign trade. Topics of the workshops include how to move money and goods across borders, marketing and selling abroad, foreign exchange and the national and local economies, country briefings, negotiating international contracts and distributorships and inter-governmental agreements on trade and investment. The **International Marketing Series** is seven two hour breakfast seminars featuring lectures by experts and question and answer sessions on topics such as promotion decisions in international marketing, how to forecast international sales, marketing products and services internationally and international business ethics. The **Small Business Export Manual**, developed by a business planning consultant and college staff, will be used by participants to evaluate their individual business structure, through a series of planning exercises, outlining a plan to enter specific international markets with

specific products or services. In addition, the Export Manual will assist participants in their preparation for their **Individual Business Consultations** with experienced business professionals, who will assist the client in developing a realistic international business plan, including the Comparison Shopping Service for export activity provided by the the International Trade Administration. Finally, participants will receive six sessions of intensive **language and cultural instruction** to facilitate travel, business and social communication and develop an awareness and appreciation of cultural differences, social manners and business practices of the Netherlands and West Germany.

The **continuing support and development component** will further develop clients' ability to plan their entry into foreign markets. As training of program participants is concluding in the Fall of 1988, the program will provide continuing consultation on the international business plan and , in addition, if appropriate, **student internship assistance** will be available to client firms through the International Business and Small Business Programs of Mankato State University and the College of St. Thomas. Such internships will begin before European trade begins and continue after trading contact is implemented. Further, the program will provide a **Quarterly International Trade Newsletter** for all participants in workshops, seminars and trade planning. The newsletter will highlight workshop and seminar schedules and content, continuing education activities and classes for small businesses, international trade issues, activities and opportunities, tips on trade and interviews with successful international business persons. The newsletter will continue after the end of the grant period and serve as a means of recruiting participants and continuing the program in other international markets. The final step before implementing the individual firm's international business plan includes two **fact finding trips** to the Netherlands and West Germany by program administrators to make direct contact with

economic development groups, trade agencies and Chambers of Commerce to facilitate the contact and promotion of participants' products or services. An initial trip was conducted in January of 1988 and a second trip presenting client products on video tape with a prospectus will be undertaken in late May of 1988. At no cost to program participants, their products will be presented to contacts developed on the first visit.

The **application and implementation** of the program's training by businesses will occur when selected participants who have completed their international marketing plan and individual consultations will contact specific businesses, trade groups and institutions in the Netherlands and West Germany on a **two week trade mission** in early December of 1988. The trade mission will be jointly sponsored by the Minnesota World Trade Association and lead by a prominent Minnesotan. Participants will pay their own package and promotional costs for participation in the trade mission which will represent their only major investment in exploring those foreign markets, besides nominal costs for seminars and workshops.

In order to advise, monitor, evaluate and provide expert guidance for the program components and the individual activities, an **International Business Advisory Committee** has been formed of community business persons, Chamber of Commerce representatives, a U.S. Department of Commerce representative, an international attorney, a banker and college administration and program staff. This committee meets quarterly and provides valuable input for workshop and seminar topics, including teaching some sessions. The Advisory Committee, with external expert consultants will undertake a program evaluation and recommendations for further program development and

expansion to new foreign markets. Potential focal areas are Thailand and the ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia and Costa Rica and the countries of the Caribbean Basin Initiative. The college has already conducted initial contacts and visits to these areas and has developed the basis for future program development through both post secondary education and business institutions.

A final component of the International Education Program for Small Businesses is **dissemination of the program as a model** and as a resource for other educational institutions. For that reason, this presentation has been given and Normandale Community College offers its program resources and information to you as a method for addressing the need for training and skill acquisition in international trade for small and medium sized businesses, especially those of target minority ownership. The college would be pleased to provide materials, newsletters or advice and would welcome visitors to our program.